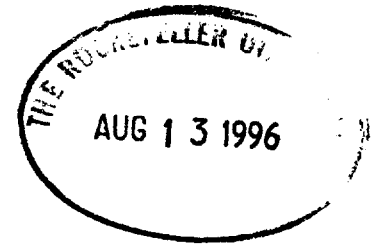


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Prof. I. Bernard Cohen  
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1996 August 08

Dr. Joshua Lederberg  
Rockefeller University  
New York, N.Y.

Dear Dr. Lederberg:

I have been slow in acknowledging your splendid gift of a series of reprints because I did not wish to send you a meaningless and formal thank you--of the kind that could be written by a secretary. And so I waited until I had time to read what you had sent.

This has meant a delay because I have been somewhat overwhelmed by my work. I have had to put the finishing touches (or final revisions) to our new translation of Newton's Principia, together with a book-length "Guide" for readers. My collaboratrix died a few years ago and so this was my sole responsibility.

At the same time, I have had to do the final revisions of two works on an aspect of the history of the computer. One is a "portrait" of Howard Aiken, the Harvard computer pioneer whose first machine, the Mark I, created a sensation, said by many older computer scientists to have marked the opening of the computer age. The other is a volume of essays on some aspects of the Harvard machines and the Harvard program in computer science which was, I believe, the first such program leading to higher degrees anywhere in the world.

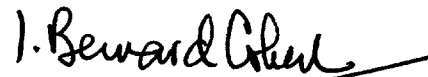
During the last decade or so I have been a member of an advisory committee to ARPA or DARPA which has sponsored two history projects, for which I was a major supervisor. One was a history of IPTO and has just been published by the Johns Hopkins Press. The other is a history of "strategic computing," now reaching the final stages. In the course of this work, I have got to know Saul Amorel, who has told me about your own involvement with computers. This is a subject which I should like to explore with you some time--among others.

Of course, I read with great interest your biographical account of Dr Tatum. But for me, one of the most interesting items in the packet was your discussion of genetic recombination in bacteria--it is rare that a scientist's personal retrospective has so analytical and interesting a point of view. I also found your discussion of projects versus people very stimulating. You refer to a forthcoming paper on the "social function" of the scientist as "forthcoming"--has it come forth? Perhaps this is the typewritten article dated 1989 in a German publication. Your papers on artificial intelligence and on communication raise very important questions which I should like to discuss when I have had an opportunity to get my own thoughts in order.

I wonder whether you have a complete list of your publications of recent years. It seems to me that, generous as you were, there are some papers of which I have some recollection (was one in NATURE?) which are not here.

Once again, let me conclude by thanking you for your kindness in sending me these publications. I am sending you separately my most recent book, parts of which may be of interest to you.

Cordially

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "I. Bernard Cohen". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

~~I. Bernard Cohen~~

Victor S. Thomas Professor (emeritus) of the  
History of Science, Harvard University